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THE "DEMOCRACY" OF UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE

By WALDO R. BROWNE

IN THAT remote past before the Great War, nothing else seemed quite so effective in making the average American citizen proud of his citizenship as a little reflection on the conscript military system of Europe. How odious and wasteful we used to consider that plan of forcing young men to give their most valuable years to the senseless puppetry of drill-ground and barracks-room! How revolting seemed the idea of driving men like cattle to the battle-field, regardless of the justice or injustice of their country's cause! With what glow of self-righteousness and self-gratulation did we read of such things as the Dreyfus case and the Zabern incident! With what shuddering indignation did we view the tyranny and degradation of barracks life, as revealed to us in play or novel! And in our innocence we would cry out: "Thank God, we live in a land free of *that* curse!"

But all this was long ago—nearly three years ago. Today this system which we had always looked upon as a thing wholly and irremediably evil, a barbaric survival among monarchical institutions—today it is being proclaimed up and down the country as not only necessary to our further existence as a nation, but as a thing that is virtuous and beautiful and desirable in itself. Specifically, it is declared to be the exact antithesis and polar opposite of what we had hitherto supposed it to be—it is splendidly "democratic." No other of its numerous virtues is dwelt upon more fulsomely than that. And it is "democratic" because it bears upon rich and poor alike, it places equal responsibility upon and requires equal service from the son of Dives and the son of Lazarus. This sort of reasoning is not peculiar to our American war-lords, however. We saw it applied the other day in the German government's announcement of industrial conscription: that measure also involved both rich and poor, and so, as its sponsors were at great pains to emphasize, was finely "democratic."

Now, if this reasoning be valid—if, indeed, the democratic test of any governmental measure relates only to its "universal" application, without regard to its moral and political connotations—then Germany represents today the finest flower, the ultimate distillation, of the democratic theory. But it is not valid. Democracy is something more than a mere form or manner of administration; it is a political code based on explicit moral sanctions, one of the chief of which is Kant's fundamental ethical law that an individual must always be considered as an end in himself, never as a means to an end. The essence of democracy is inherent in the principle of *free consent*, as opposed to *compulsion*—in the conception of men and women as individual *wills* rather than as *chattels*.

Compulsory military service is no more democratic, because of its "universal" application, than would be a national program for placing all male citizens between certain age limits in government prisons for an equal term of years. In truth, a measure which would compel many hundreds of thousands of Americans to conform to a revolutionary innovation in our national affairs that is repugnant to their deepest moral convictions is the very denial and negation of democracy.

"What is it to be born free and not to live free?" asks Thoreau. "What is the value of any political freedom but as a means to moral freedom? Is it a freedom to be slaves, or a freedom to be free, of which we boast?"

On the day when this country adopts compulsory military laws she will cease to be a democracy, because she will have denied her citizens the liberty of individual thought and action in a matter touching the well-springs of religion and morality. She will have denied them the right to be considered as personalities rather than as chattels—as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. She will have denied them the freedom to be free.

COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING

By GEORGE A. WALTON

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ONCE when the doctor came a little girl sidled up to him, saying quietly, "I know four doctors—you and Dr. Quiet and Dr. Diet and Dr. Merryman." "Yes," he answered, "and I know another one, better than all the rest put together—Dr. Time."

It is this last-named gentleman, Dr. Time, that has not been consulted by the supporters of military training. Every real educator knows that educational processes take time. He knows that it takes time to teach a child the right methods of study, to develop an interest in a new and difficult subject. He knows that children who slur their words or think vaguely or write broken sentences need time to learn correct enunciation, clear thinking, and proper sentence structures. Many a child will learn to write correct English for the English teacher; but much time is required for that habit to permeate his whole self, so that on all occasions he writes in good form. To instill qualities of mind and spirit requires time—not days and weeks, but months and years.

The proposals that have so far been made for compulsory military training overlook this fact and appear inadequate and foolish to one who has had experience in educative work. War is a very complicated procedure, and it is ridiculous to suppose that a training of value for real war can be given in the proposed periods of 15 or 20 days annually. It is also argued that military training will develop among the American people desirable spiritual qualities now lacking. Teachers in other lines of education would not care to be held responsible for results if they were expected to transform the moral nature of an adolescent boy or girl in so short a time.

The Plattsburg experiment, although carried out under special conditions, has been only partially successful. Efficient, mature men volunteered to go to Plattsburg and made remarkable progress. Inefficient boys, not yet full grown, compelled to take military training, will not give the same response. Among the younger men who have been at Plattsburg, it is not hard to gather evidence that the time spent is insufficient to produce the moral qualities supposed to be inculcated by military training. It was a young man, but recently from Plattsburg, who drove his automobile into the soft earth by the roadside, crushing down the young grass

just sprouted, rather than lift his voice to call across to a friend on the sidewalk. The inculcation by military training of respect for the rights of others requires more than a five weeks' vacation. Unless the American people are ready to give more time to military training than any legislation has so far proposed, the compulsory plan is impracticable and whatever time is spent will be wasted.

The Germans require one year's training for graduates of the *Gymnasium*—that is, the classical high school; for others, two. A larger proportion of American boys get high-school education, but as they are less docile and accustomed to a different spirit in the schools, an equal allowance of time is necessary to give efficient military training. Is America to imitate Germany in this matter?

Educators know very well that the number and character of the instructors is an important factor in a student's growth. Young people learn as much from the way they are treated as from what they are taught. In order to get good results, boarding schools of high standard have found it necessary to provide one teacher for about every nine to ten students. Some do even better, having one teacher for six or seven students.

Boys and girls of the adolescent period are a mixture of good and evil impulses. The ordinary environment in which we all live contains much to bring out the worst side of our nature. When boys are brought together in large groups, they react on each other, unfortunately in many instances. To offset these tendencies, educators rely upon adequate supervision, both as to number and character of the supervisors. They seek men of good character and, above all, that magnetic quality which appeals to a boy and awakens the desire to imitate. Not every good man nor every brainy man makes a good teacher. Definite rules, rigidly enforced, fail to produce moral growth. They tend to call forth evasion and deceit. Personal appeal, based on the boy's admirations and a community of interest, enlist his own will in keeping himself straight. Since hard work and good order depend on a relation that is largely personal, the number of boys per supervisor must be limited; for few men can sincerely carry on personal relations with any great number of people and live with them all the time.

It has always been true that evil influences congregate around military camps. Temptations are particularly acute, because of the monotonous character of the drill. Vicious habits among the boys will tend to increase, unless checked by a supervision adequate both in numbers and character.

In the plans for military training already formulated and presented to the public there is only the most indefinite provision for supervising the training camps. The Chamberlain bill would place an officer in charge of each congressional district, and adds that he may have as much assistance as necessary. No standard is set, either as to numbers, salary, or character, of the assistants. No notion is given of the way these men will be organized. Is the nation justified in introducing such training until assurance is given to the parents of the exact conditions which their boys will have to face in camp? Is it right to call on the citizens of this country to foot the bill until they have had estimates of what efficient administration will cost? Compulsory military training is im-

practicable on account of the enormous numbers of officers necessary to give proper supervision to the training camp and also on account of the tremendous expense involved. In training adolescent boys by the military method the cost reckoned in terms of moral safety is prohibitive.

Military training is also impracticable because it will run counter to the spirit that is now being developed in secondary schools, both public and private. Teachers are fast losing their character of lords and masters of the students. They are not so particular as previously about their dignity. They are coming more and more to be friends of the students. They share the student's interest; they exult with him in victory and share his disappointments when the school team is defeated. Students are coming to look upon their instructors as a vital part of the school machinery, to be appreciated and enjoyed. The old idea that the teacher is the natural-born enemy of the student, to be circumvented on all occasions, is passing. The teacher seeks the student's point of view and invites cooperation in the work at hand. Serious educational journals publish articles recording the student's opinions on various subjects. The time has come when the chief study of the schoolmaster is his pupils and not the subject-matter.

The teacher expects that work will be done, and that obedience will be rendered; but he relies more upon invoking the spirit of voluntary initiative and voluntary cooperation than upon orders. He wants the student to understand the reason for his request, because he knows that the student does better work if he feels it is his own task and not something imposed upon him by external authority. The type of obedience thus procured is that of the athletic team. Success in football or baseball depends upon team work. A player must not do as he pleases; he must obey the best interests of the team, and in the thousand and one situations which the game produces he must decide with instant quickness what the need of the team demands. The teamwork obedience of the school-room and the athletic field is incompatible with the implicit obedience which the officer exacts of the private and which, under a military system, would necessarily have to be exacted of the young men in training.

It is probable that an officer learns something of teamwork obedience, but in many instances even they are ignorant of the real situation. Under compulsory training most of our young men would come in as privates. The spirit of the camp would necessarily be antagonistic to the spirit of the school. To reconcile the two is an impracticable task. Either the camp will unfit the boys for school life or the school will unfit the boys for the camp.

A consideration of this subject cannot be closed without expressing the feeling of horror that one naturally feels over the idea of military conscription in America. Should it come to pass, many loyal Americans—men and boys—would find their patriotism shattered. In most cases they would eventually reconstruct it, sadly, because on a lower plane. The last few years have been trying ones to people striving for high ideals. Shall America lower her ideals to adopt at this time an ill-considered, half-formed, and impracticable plan of military conscription?